

WASHINGTON STAR

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-00001

JUN 2 1956

X

Rare Autograph of Button Gwinnett Is Surprise in Bethesdan's Gift to Yale

To the complete surprise of both donor and recipient, Yale University has received a rare and valuable autograph of Button Gwinnett, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

The Yale windfall, conservatively valued at \$30,000, was the gift of Craig Colgate, jr., of 5413 Hampden lane, Bethesda.

Mr. Colgate, fully aware of the value of the find, nonetheless refused the library's offer to return the document. He seemed pleased with the Yale reaction to it.

"They regard it as something too good to be true," he said.

Mr. Colgate, a Federal Government analyst and a Yale alumnus Class of 1935, recently decided to clean out an old attic trunk that contained family papers dating from Revolutionary war times.

He sifted through the 100-odd papers and 300-odd books with the help of a professional appraiser. The tomes and documents looked interesting enough to offer to the Yale Library Yale accepted.

Mr. Colgate thought no more of it until he got an excited call from Librarian James T. Babb.



Among the papers, overlooked by both the donor and his appraiser, was a handwritten receipt signed by Button Gwinnett.

Gwinnett's signature is the rarest of all who signed the Declaration. Only 50 samples are known to exist.

The receipt in the Colgate collection states:

"Recd. October 12th 1762 of later.

Mr. Ben Davies One hundred and seven pounds fourteen shillings & seven pence in Ballance of all Accounts as witness my hand—New York.

(signed) Button Gwinnett"

Mr. Colgate said last night that Benjamin Davies, a Colonial merchant, is one of his direct lineal ancestors. The receipt was one of 175 leaves in a bound book of receipts kept by Davies, Mr. Colgate said.

Another important aspect of the document is that it places Gwinnett, about whom little is known, in America six months earlier than previously believed. He was a delegate from Georgia when he signed the Declaration. He later became Governor of that State.

Following a defeat of Georgia troops by the British in Florida in 1777, Gwinnett and Gen. Lachlan McIntosh were brought before a court of inquiry to determine which was responsible for the military blunder.

Gwinnett was found guiltless and McIntosh, in a fit of rage, called Gwinnett a "scoundrel" and a lying rascal." A duel followed on the outskirts of Savannah and Gwinnett was wounded. He died three days

CPYRGHT